JUNE 2026

ROCK TALK

The Official Newsletter of the Withlacoochee Rockhounds

Pearls

Pearls have been valued by human beings for thousands of years, with mentions of this precious gemstone appearing in the Bible and ancient Roman text. Pearls also had religious significance in ancient China, and are believed to have been associated with the moon and protection against dragons. Today, the pearl is associated with both innocence and inner strength and is the birthstone for the month of June.

Pearls are easier to come by these days than even a few hundred years ago, yet that hasn't diminished their importance. They are still highly valued and sought after among lovers of fine gemstones.

Pearls were once found only inside mussels living in the wild, in lakes, rivers, and oceans. Until the late 1800s, pearls could only be harvested by divers, who had to gather thousands of mussels to find even one pearl among them. As a result, pearls were extremely rare and prohibitively expensive. But the advent of perliculture—the cultivation of pearls— was first perfected in Japan, making the pearl accessible to millions of people all around the world.

What are pearls in the marketplace? Today, the vast majority are cultured, meaning they were harvested on pearl farms. Most of these farms are located in the Far East, with China serving as home to the greatest number of pearl farms in the world.

The mussels that produce pearls can be found in both fresh and saltwater, depending on the species. Pearl farms using saltwater are located in coves or bays, while freshwater mussels for pearls are kept in ponds or former rice paddies.

This Month's Roundup of Stories

- Pearls
- Secretary's Report
- June 2026 Announcements
- Purple Crystals
- Oco Geodes
- Opal
- Andara Glass
- What is an Agate?
- Bench tips

June's Birthstone - Pearl

What are pearls and how are they made? For a pearl to develop, foreign matter must enter the mussel's mantle or gonad, where it becomes encased with calcium carbonate. Cultivated pearls begin with the deliberate insertion of an object into the mussel (called nucleation). The material, size and shape of the foreign object used for nucleation depends on the type of pearl the farmer wishes to produce. Saltwater ayoko oysters are inserted with a piece of shell from another mussel, while beads are often placed inside freshwater mussels to create the roundest pearls.

Read the entire article at *RockNGem.com*

Secretary's Report

Minutes and More from Club Secretary - Melodye Steverson

Withlacoochee Rockhounds Monthly Meeting - Minutes
Date 5-13-2026

The meeting was called to order by President Michael Steverson at 7:09pm.

We all stood for the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence.
There were no new members to recognize.
There were 5 guests in attendance: Crystal, Mike and their 3 children.

Diane Hensley made a motion to accept the minutes of our April meeting as printed in the newsletter, Chris Ward seconded. Passed by all members.
Treasurer Janet Wheeler gave the Treasurer's report. Bonnie Seeman made a motion to accept the Treasurer's report subject to audit. Seconded by Roberta Oldread. Approved by all.

President Steverson began with announcements;

Tonight's program will be provided by Hunter Mellring and Diane Hensley, our 2025 William Holland School Scholarship winners. They recently returned from WHS and are excited to share their experiences with all of us
President Steverson continued: We received a letter from Carol Pebbly, the President of the Weeki Wachee Senior Center (our clubhouse). President Pebbly stated that the clubhouse has been left in unacceptable condition after some clubs had been meeting there. Our club always makes sure to return the property to the condition we find it in, or better. However, apparently there is a very specific way the chairs need to be placed that we were unaware of. We will get a chart from President Pebbly and follow it going forward.

Our program next month will be presented by Vice President Chris Ward all about geodes from Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.

Our cab class is gearing up to happen this month. The teacher will be in contact with those who have shown interest.
President Steverson gave an update on the "Field Trip" insurance he has been researching and will be publishing the results in the next newsletter.

Isaac Mercado made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Mike McManus seconded, passed by all.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:22pm.
Minutes respectfully submitted by Secretary Melodye Steverson

June 2026 Announcements

IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN!!! If you wish to apply for the club's "William Holland School for the Lapidary Arts" Scholarship Award for 2026, please pick up an application from the front table at the next meeting. Fill it out and give it to Secretary Steverson by/at the June meeting. The main requirements for consideration are that you have been a club member for 2 years, that you have been an active member during that time, and that you agree to give a presentation on what you learned or agree to teach a class or classes on what you learned at WHS. Applications will be considered by the Board and results will be announced soon.

A REMINDER

IF YOU ARE SICK OR HAVE RECENTLY BEEN SICK AND MAY STILL BE CONTAGIOUS, PLEASE DO NOT ATTEND OUR MEETING. THERE WERE SICK PEOPLE AT OUR JANUARY MEETING/PARTY, WHICH CAUSED OTHER MEMBERS TO BECOME ILL. THIS CAUSED SUFFERING, MEDICAL BILLS AND LOSS OF INCOME. BE CONSIDERATE OF YOUR FELLOW MEMBERS.

To all members: Your president and your Board of Directors are working diligently to plan and facilitate classes and training sessions for you to learn the skills you have shown an interest in. We are looking toward the future of our club and are excited by what we see. At the next two meetings, we will ask each member to fill out a very short questionnaire regarding what you would like to learn as a club member. This will help your Officers and Board know what you would enjoy.

Purple Crystals and Gemstones

Purple crystals and gemstones have captured attention across design, collecting, and lapidary circles, especially after Pantone named Viva Magenta its 2023 Color of the Year. But long before the spotlight, this violet-to-magenta color range has held enduring appeal. Whether showcasing lavender, plum, lilac, fuchsia, or indigo tones, the captivating palette of purple minerals reflects the unique chemistry and crystal structure of each stone.

Viva magenta is a deeper shade of hot pink, a balance between warm and cool, with saturated reddish and purple undertones. Hues range from violet to mauve, purple, indigo, lilac, plum, lavender, crimson, maroon, burgundy, fuchsia and magenta. The varying amounts of blue and red color pigments, based on the mineral's chemical compositions, tip the balance slightly from one color hue to the next.

This enchanting palette includes many favorite lapidary materials. Among them are amethyst, purple chalcedony, charoite, sugilite, lavender jade, tiffany stone, tanzanite, kunzite, purple sapphires, fluorite, rubellite tourmaline, and red garnets, including pyrope, rhodolite, almandine, and anthill garnets. Transparent gemstones are commonly faceted, while the opaque materials are more often cut as cabochons, free-forms, carvings, beads, eggs, and spheres.

* Amethyst & Purple Chalcedony: Amethyst is a prominent crystalline quartz variety, with violet crystals that exhibit well-defined terminations. Amethyst has been a favorite lapidary material since ancient times. The chalcedony group is a cryptocrystalline variety of quartz that has crystals too small to be seen under the microscope. Purple chalcedonies are attractive for their color uniformity, but fine white lacey bands and fortification patterns may also be present, as in Holley blue chalcedony. This material is found near Holley, just four miles southwest of the town of Sweet Home in western Oregon.

- Purple Sapphires:

Sapphires come from world-famous locations, including Burma and Africa. Sapphires mined in Montana are among the most beautiful and valuable purple crystals and gemstones in North America. They come in every color of the rainbow, colorless too, including shades from hot pink to purple. All colors beyond blue are considered fancy-color sapphires, except for the red ones, which are rubies. Transparent sapphires are usually faceted, but some may also be cabbed. They are hard and durable, and the perfect match for any jewelry design project.

Read the article at RockNGem.com

Come join club Vice President, Chris Ward, at our June meeting as he takes us on a journey to Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, in search of the legendary Oco Geodes.

Learn about the history and lore of this exclusive rock that dates back to their formation more than 130 million years ago.

At the conclusion of the program, there will be a polished sample for everyone to take home with them.

Clubhouse Address:
3357 Susan Dr
Spring Hill, FL 34606

Opal

Opal is one of the most visually extraordinary gemstones on Earth. Some specimens flash with brilliant rainbow colors that appear to move and shift under light, creating an effect unlike almost any other natural material.

Unlike crystalline gemstones such as diamond or quartz, opal forms from microscopic silica spheres arranged in delicate internal patterns. As light passes through these tiny structures, it creates the famous "play-of-color" effect that made opal legendary among collectors and jewelers.

Some opals glow with blue, green, orange, or red fire, while rare black opals can display intense flashes that seem almost unreal.

Its unusual beauty, water-rich composition, and constantly changing colors made opal one of the world's most fascinating gemstones.

Opal is a hydrated amorphous form of silica composed mainly of silicon dioxide and water. Unlike true minerals, opal does not possess a regular crystalline atomic structure, which is why it is classified as a mineraloid rather than a mineral.

The amount of water inside opal may vary significantly, sometimes reaching more than 20% by weight.

Opal forms in cracks, cavities, and spaces within rocks when silica-rich water slowly deposits microscopic silica particles over long periods of time.

Its spectacular optical effects and wide range of colors helped opal become one of the most famous gemstones in the world.

Famous opals, notable discoveries, and opal-adorned jewelry pieces have captured the fascination of people around the world for their exquisite beauty and unique play of color.

Here are some notable examples of famous opals:

Aurora Australis: The Aurora Australis is one of the world's most famous black opals. Discovered in Lightning Ridge, New South Wales, Australia, in 1938, it is renowned for its intense play of color, including vivid reds and blues. It weighs approximately 180 carats and is considered one of the most valuable opals in existence.

Andamooka Opal: Found in South Australia in 1932, the Andamooka Opal is another legendary black opal. It displayed remarkable play of color and weighed over 200 carats in its rough state. It was later cut into several smaller stones, with the largest known as the "Queen's Opal."

The Olympic Australis: Discovered in 1956, the Olympic Australis is one of the largest and most valuable opals ever found. It weighs around 17,000 carats and was named in honor of the 1956 Olympic Games held in Melbourne, Australia. Its play of color is exceptional, featuring a wide spectrum of hues.

Read the entire article at *GeologyScience.com*

Andara Glass

At first glance, Andara Glass doesn't even look natural. Some pieces glow with electric blue colors, others appear deep green, violet, or amber — almost like molten light trapped inside translucent glass.

For some people, Andara Glass is a powerful spiritual crystal connected to healing and energy work. For others, especially geologists, it is simply a type of volcanic glass similar to obsidian or even man-made glass materials.

Some claim it contains ancient Earth energies. Others say the entire story around it has been exaggerated through internet mythology and crystal marketing.

Somewhere between geology, beauty, spirituality, and controversy, Andara Glass became one of the most debated "gemstones" online.

But what exactly is it? Why are the colors so intense? And why do scientists and crystal collectors see it so differently?

Andara Glass is a colorful glass-like material usually associated with volcanic regions and metaphysical crystal communities. It became widely known through online crystal markets where it was promoted as a rare high-vibrational stone with spiritual properties.

Scientifically, many geologists classify it as volcanic glass or human-modified glass material rather than a true mineral or gemstone in the traditional sense. Unlike crystalline minerals that form with an organized atomic structure, glass forms without a regular crystal lattice.

Its appearance is what made it famous. Large translucent pieces with glowing colors can look almost unreal under sunlight.

Is Andara Glass Natural or Man-Made?
This is one of the most common questions people ask.

Some specimens may contain natural volcanic glass components, especially material related to obsidian-forming volcanic activity. However, many experts believe at least part of the Andara material sold online may involve human processing, melting, or enhancement.

Unlike diamonds, quartz, or emeralds, Andara Glass is not officially recognized as a traditional gemstone species in mineralogical classification systems.
That does not stop collectors from appreciating it for its appearance. The intense colors and transparency are still visually impressive whether the material is entirely natural or partially altered.

Andara Glass shares its basic composition with other types of obsidian, primarily consisting of silicon dioxide (SiO_2), the same chemical compound found in quartz. However, unlike quartz, which forms crystals, obsidian lacks an ordered internal structure due to its rapid cooling from molten lava, resulting in an amorphous or non-crystalline structure.

Read the article at *GeologyScience.com*

What is an Agate?

What is an agate?
Agate is a form of microcrystalline chalcedony quartz. It is the most popular type of chalcedony because of its banding, its brilliant colors, and numerous varieties. While banding is technically a requisite to be an agate it is common to refer to certain other forms of non-banded chalcedony as agate. Moss agate and eye agate are examples of non-banded chalcedony.

Agate has a seven Mohs hardness, making it desirable in the lapidary trade. Agate is translucent and exhibits a vitreous luster. As with other varieties of quartz, its chemical formula is SiO2. The name agate comes from the river Achates in Sicily and was given that name by the Greek philosopher, Theophrastus.
Agate names can be derived from the location where they are found such as Botswana agate or Laguna agate or because of a feature they exhibit like lace, fire or moss.

Agate formation takes place when silica solutions fill voids in cavities layer by layer such as in Florida's agatized coral. The voids typically are in solidified volcanic lava flows and the layering over long periods of time can result in different colors because of chemical changes in the silica solutions.

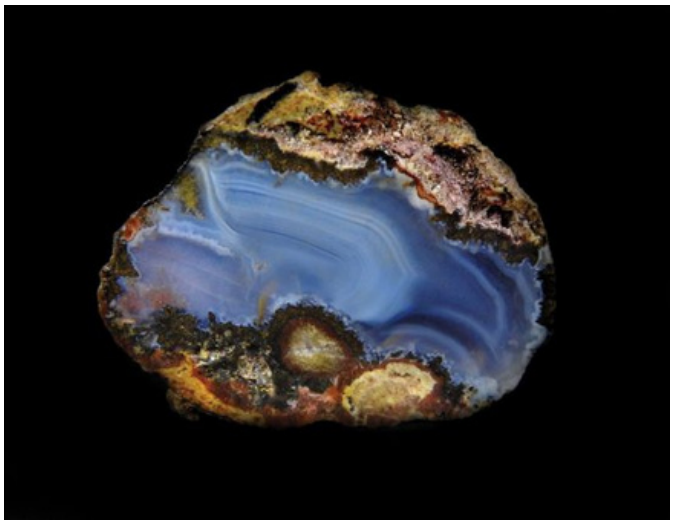
The layering can deposit the chalcedony in concentric circles around the wall of the cavity or build the layers up from the bottom of the cavity.

Agate is used to produce cabochons, beads, and free-form objects in jewelry making. Book-ends, ashtrays, and sculptures are also made using agate.

In the metaphysical realm, many wonder what is an agate and how can it help me. Agates are said to change negative energy into positive energy and to heal anxiety and internal anger. Agate may also help with concentration and boost mental function.

In the United States, agates are found in Oregon, Wyoming, Montana, Arizona, Idaho, California, Washington, New Mexico, Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, Utah, Florida, Colorado, Arkansas, and Nevada. Around the world, they are found in Australia, Germany, Brazil, Czechia, Botswana, Mexico, Morocco, Afghanistan, Argentina, Canada, Chile, India, China, and over 40 other countries.

Read the entire article at *RockNGem.com*



Field Trips

We have finally secured field trip insurance for the club!
More on the insurance coverage will be explained at the meetings, but suffice to say, we are now covered when we want to do club-sanctioned field trips!
Thank you for being patient while we worked on this.

Monthly Meeting Courtesy

Our monthly meetings are a time for members to get together to share their love of rocks, minerals and fossils. It is a chance to learn from each other, teach each other and bond with people that have common interests. It's also a time for the club to conduct a business meeting, during which club Officers and Directors inform club members of changes that have happened or are proposed to happen in the future to club procedure or rules.

It is a time for announcements of coming classes, programs, scholarships, and special events.
It may be a time for discussion on a topic if it is of concern to a majority of members present.
Members may also share experiences and news of interest to other members.
Our monthly meetings should always be a time of sharing, education and entertainment.

We should all show respect and consideration for each other at our meetings, especially for the Facilitator of the meeting, whether it be our President or one of our other Officers. This respect has been lacking in our meetings for several months now. A few attendees have been speaking out without being recognized, shouting, and making inappropriate comments. This not only disrupts our meetings but makes members, new and old, feel uneasy and uncomfortable. It makes our club seem very unprofessional and is disrespectful to the Officers, Directors, and your fellow members.

Going forward, our Board has decided to strive for a more business-like atmosphere while our business meetings are in order. If you are an attending member and have a question or comment, please raise your hand and wait to be recognized by the Facilitator of the meeting. After you are acknowledged and speak, if you later have something else to add, please raise your hand and again be recognized to speak. Please be respectful and polite when you are addressing the Officers and Directors, who volunteer their time, work tirelessly, and make every effort to keep this club alive and prosperous.

We feel this will make for a smoother meeting with all members being heard. No members will be shouted over and no members will feel over run with chaotic outbursts. We will all feel a part of the meeting and will learn more about what our club is doing for and with us.

Withlacoochee Rockhounds

Our monthly club meeting is held at the Weeki Wachee Senior Citizens Club, 3357 Susan Dr., Spring Hill, FL 34606, on the 2nd Wednesday of each month from 7:00 to 9:00 PM

www.withlacoocheerockhounds.com

Your Business Card Size Ad in Rock Talk

The cost for non-club members to advertise their businesses in Rock Talk is $10.00 per month. Contact Michael Steverson to set up an ad in both the newsletter and the club website. It will benefit both your business and our club.

Advertisers Needed

Please help us find advertisers for the *Rock Talk* and our website. The club can use the monthly income. Both the *Rock Talk* and our website have more exposure than only club members

Contact club treasure Janet Wheeler: ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com
or send to: Withlacoochee Rockhounds
PO Box 5634
Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634

Withlacoochee Rockhounds

Purpose

We are a non-profit organization whose purpose is to foster interest and promote knowledge of minerals, gems, fossils, lapidary arts, and earrth sciences, through regular meetings, informative programs, and workshops. PLUS, our annual gem, mineral and jewelry show.

Membership is open to anyone sharing such interests.

Dues

Dues are $35.00 annually for adults, and $5.00 for children under 18 years of age.

Club Meeting Location and Time

Weeki Wachee Senior Citizens Center, 3375 Susan Dr in Spring Hill. Meetings are held the second Wednesday of the month at 7:00PM

2026 Club Officers and Appointees

President	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com .com
Vice President	Chris Ward	818.439.0217	chris_ward678@yahoo.com
Secretary	Melodye Steverson	352.683.9496	melodye@designsbymelodye.com
Treasurer	Janet Wheeler	727.938.3644	ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com
Rock Talk Editor	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com
Club Webmaster	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com
Mailing Reporter	Janet Wheeler	727.938.3644	ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com
Audio/Visual Coordinator	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com

Michael Steverson (President) Chris Ward (Vice President) Melodye Steverson (Secretary) Janet Wheeler (Treasurer)
Hunter Mellring Leslie Newberry Roger Wheeler Janice Wojcik (Vendor Co-chair) Ralph Barber (Past President)

Bench Tips from Brad Smith

Brad Smith's *Bench Tips* are a monthly feature of Rock Talk

DRILL PRESS VISES

For a nice looking rivet head, use brass escutcheon pins. You'll have perfectly rounded heads that are all the same size and shape. The pins are a little hard to find, so try the best hardware stores first. Be sure to get solid brass pins, not brass plated steel. If unsure, test them with a magnet.
The pins are readily available online. Lee Valley Tools has them in 14 - 18 gauge and lengths from 1/4 inch to 1 inch. Go to http://www.LeeValley.com and do an item search on "brass escutcheon pin"

For best results, select a drill that gives you a hole with a close fit to the rivet. Trim the rivet to leave a little less than one diameter sticking out the back side. Place the head on a scrap of hard plastic on the anvil so as to not flatten the head. I prefer a ball peen hammer (with a small 3/8 inch ball) for setting the rivet.

Easy Prong Setting

When setting stones in a prong mount, the tool is less likely to slip off the prong if you grind a shallow groove into its face or rough up the face a bit with sandpaper. Some folks prefer a prong pusher for doing this, and others like a set of pliers with a slight groove on one jaw.

The easiest way to create a slot on the pusher is with a file, and the quickest way to create a slot on one jaw of your pliers is with a separating disc. Then do a rough polish on the slot with a medium grit, knife-edge silicone wheel.

Learn New Skills with Brad's "How To Do It" Books
Amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith

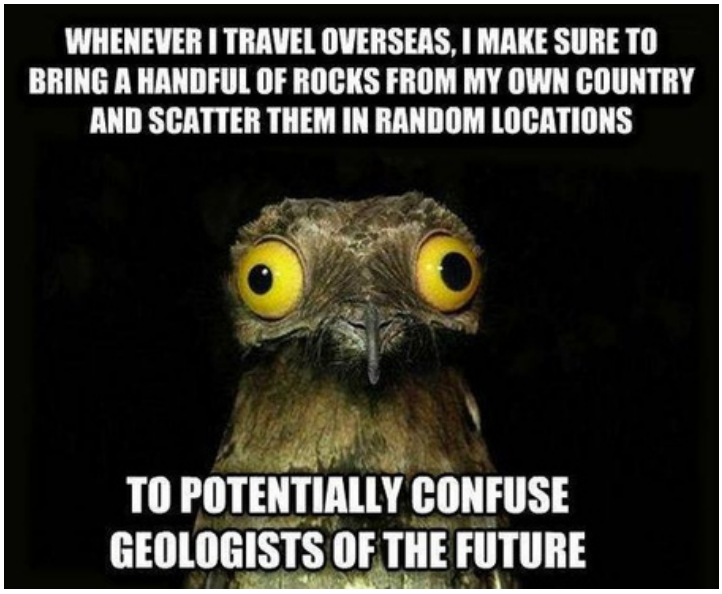
Rock Talk Funny Papers

ROCKSTRACTED

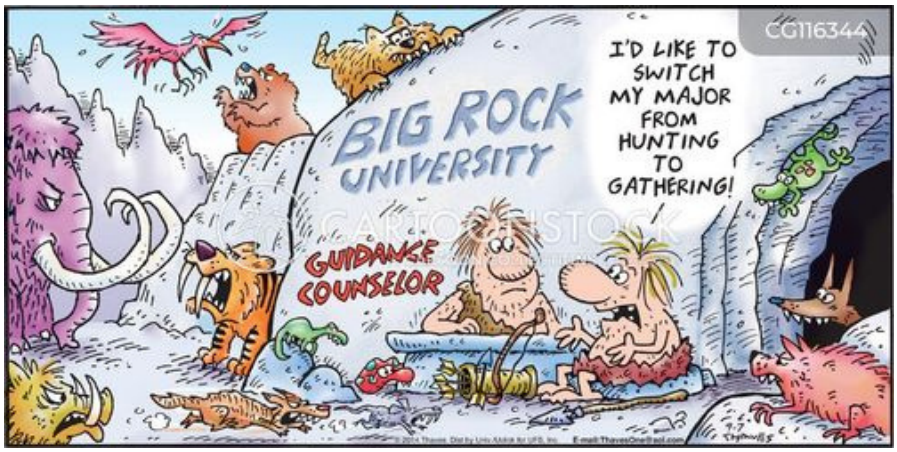
[räk-strak-təd] *adjective*

Unable to concentrate because one's mind is preoccupied with rocks.

example: Me



Collecting rocks is a fun hobby ... you can never have too many things to throw at people.



From The Editor

Hello to all Withlacoochee Rockhounds

It is I, your friendly neighborhood editor again.

For our May meeting, Hunter Mellring and Diane Hensley gave us a presentation about their trip to William Holland - the classes they took, and their time there. If you have ever considered taking classes at William Holland, they gave you a great report on what it's like to go there.

For our June meeting, club Vice President Chris Ward is giving us a presentation on Oco Geoedes from Brazil. You will be taking home a geode of your own when he has comcluded the presentation.

And....Leslie Newberry is going to give us a presentation on geodes for our July meeting. We're planning on cutting open, or cracking open the geodes from her presentation.

And, is that Cabalot coming up I see? Yep, it's just around the corner!

Lots of stuff coming up!

If you would like to place a business card ad in the newsletter, please feel free to contact me, and we'll get you added to the next available issue.

Additionally, if any of you have not received your newsletter or are not receiving my e-mail blasts (meetings, rock sales, etc.), *please* check your spam folder. If you are still not receiving them, please contact me, and let's make sure I have your correct e-mail address.

Our Board would like our members to come up with suggestions for programs to be presented at our monthly meetings. What would you like to see? What would you like to learn? What would you like to know? Is there something you'd like to teach or present? You can help our club expand its educational repertoire. We'd love to hear from you all.

Contact any Board member or bring your written suggestions to a meeting.

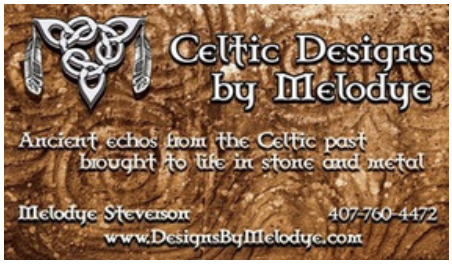
Rock On!!!

Club Phone Number - 352.587.2714

Warning to Withlacoochee Rockhound Members

During the last several months, illicit requests have been sent to members of various clubs in the US, including the Withlacoochee Rockhounds, asking members to purchase gift cards that would be used as donations to various organizations.
These are SCAMS.
Be advised that our club has never and will never ask members to buy gift cards or provide any form of monitary funds to anyone or any organization by phone call, email, or any other method of communication.

Rockhounds Advertisers



Your Business Card Size Ad in Rock Talk

The costfor non-club members to advertisetheirbusinesses in Rock Talk is $10.00 per month.
Contact Michael Steverson to set up an ad in both the newsletter and the club website. It will benefit both your business and our club.

If your ad has a web address, or Etsy shop address, I have linked to it.

Advertisers Are Needed
Please help us find advertisers for the Rock Talk and our website.
The monthly income from these ads is beneficial to the club.
Both the Rock Talk and our website have more exposure than only club members.
Contact club treasurer Janet Wheeler: ceecgirl@tampabay.rr.com or send to:
Withlacoochee Rockhounds
PO Box 5634 Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634

Membership Form - 2026

Withlacoochee Rockhounds
Hernando County FL

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Full Name _____

Partner's Full Name _____
* If both applying for membership

Child's Full Name _____
* If under 18, and applying with parent

Street Address _____

City _____

State / ZIP _____

Phone Number _____

Email _____

Annual Membership Dues:

*Choose your type of membership

- ☐ Individual Membership $35.00/ea
- ☐ Individual Membership $35.00/ea
- ☐ Under 18 Membership $5.00/ea
- ☐ Under 18 Membership $5.00/ea

☐ Returning Member?

☐ New Member?

If you are applying, for example, as husband, wife and child (under 18), then fill in full name, partner's name and child's name above. Then, choose two individual memberships to the left, along with an under 18 membership.

Give this completed form, along with your check (made payable to "Withlacoochee Rockhounds") or credit card for dues to Club Secretary Janet Wheeler at a club meeting. Or, you may mail the form to:

Withlacoochee Rockhounds
PO Box 5634
Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634